

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the Final Action dated September 24, 2003. The claim amendments included herein serve, in pertinent part, to rewrite allowable dependent claims in independent form. Accordingly, the amendments should be entered in due course and the application should proceed to allowance.

Claims 1-16 were pending in the application. In the Office Action, claims 1, 3, 4, 8-10, 12 and 13 were rejected, and claims 2, 5-7, 11 and 14-16 were objected to. In this Amendment, claims 1, 3, 4, 10, 12 and 13 have been canceled, and claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 14 have been amended. Claims 2, 5-9, 11 and 14-16 thus remain for consideration.

Applicants submit that claims 2, 5-9, 11 and 14-16 are in condition for allowance and request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections in light of the following remarks.

§103 Rejections / Claim Objections / Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1, 3, 4, 8-10, 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bottomley et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,005,887), and further in view of Friedlander et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,501,747).

Claims 2, 5-7 and 14-16 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim; however, the Examiner indicated that claims 2, 5-7, 11 and 14-16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 10, 12 and 13 have been canceled, thereby rendering their rejections moot.

Claims 2, 5-7, 11 and 14-16 have been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and are therefore in condition for allowance.

Furthermore, claims 8 and 9 have been amended to depend from claim 2, and are therefore believed to be patentable over the prior art based, at least, on their dependency on claim 2.

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims now pending in the application are in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

It is submitted that these claims, as originally presented, are patentably distinct over the prior art cited by the Examiner, and that these claims were in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112. Changes to these claims, as presented herein, are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §§101, 102, 103 or 112. Rather, these changes are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled.

Statements appearing above with respect to the disclosures in the cited references represent the present opinions of the Applicants' undersigned attorney and, in the event that the Examiner disagrees with any such opinions, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner specifically indicate those portions of the respective reference providing the basis for a contrary view.

If any issues remain, or if the Examiner has any further suggestions, he/she is invited to call the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

PATENT
450117-02106

The Examiner is hereby authorized to charge any insufficient fees or credit any overpayment associated with the above-identified application to Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

The Examiner's consideration of this matter is gratefully acknowledged.

Respectfully submitted,

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